

trainings on health, education, civic engagement, criminal justice and economic development are scheduled. I will be bringing welcoming greetings to all of the delegates and special guest assembled for the 75th Annual Luncheon, which begins at 12 Noon and features our dynamic leader, the Honorable Dr. Roslyn M. Brock, Chairman of our NAACP National Board of Directors as the keynote speaker. Other speakers include the Hon. Alphonso David, New York State Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights, Michael Mulgrew, President United Federation of Teachers, Reverend Edward Mulraine, Unity Tabernacle Baptist Church Mt. Vernon, New York, and our beloved State Conference President Dr. Hazel N. Dukes.

The activities of the day culminate with the 75th Diamond Anniversary Awards Dinner Dance. Cheryl Willis, Anchor NY1 News and author of "Die Free" A Heroic Family History," will be the Mistress of Ceremony. The evening speakers include my longtime loyal friend, supporter and ally, George Gresham, President of the mighty SEIU Local 1199. The closing program will take place on Sunday, October 9, 2011 with a breakfast, Church Service, and a legislative session presided by Judge Laura D. Blackburne, Chairman of the Crisis Magazine and by Kenneth Cohen, Sr., Regional Director of the Metropolitan Council of NAACP Branches.

Mr. Speaker, let me take a moment to salute my sister, Hazel N. Dukes as we celebrate our Diamond Jubilee of our New York State Conference. For as long as I have been involved with the NAACP and a Member of Congress, Hazel has always been an outspoken opponent of policies that she felt undermined the achievements of the civil rights movements of the 1960s and today. Hazel's political career has made her one of the most important black activists and campaigners of the last quarter of the twentieth century; I am proud of her stance to reduce class sizes in our New York City Schools and for equal and fair education for all children. Hazel can be a one-woman band, but her advocacy and hard work create and orchestrate for change.

I ask my colleagues and a very grateful Nation to join me in a very special congressional salute to the NAACP New York State Conference celebrating their 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary.

ST. CROIX CROSSING "MEGA-BRIDGE" OPPOSED BY TAXPAYERS FOR COMMON SENSE

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Ms. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, today, the Natural Resources Committee is marking up H.R. 850 which grants an exemption from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in order to allow construction of a \$700 million mega-bridge connecting Minnesota and Wisconsin across the St. Croix River. This bridge would be located less than six miles from the eight lane Interstate 94 crossing of the St. Croix. At a time of extremely scarce transportation dollars and tremendous need (Minnesota and Wisconsin have more than 2,000 structurally deficient bridges in need of repairs) building a sin-

gle mega-bridge with a cost of \$700 million is fiscally irresponsible and terrible public policy.

I strongly oppose H.R. 850 and I am not alone. The conservative watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense sent a letter today to members of the Natural Resources Committee opposing H.R. 850 and states, "accepting a project that is too big and too expensive for the sake of speeding project delivery would be irresponsible at any time, and even more so while we are doing everything possible to find our way out of a budgetary mess."

A St. Croix River crossing that is affordable, meets transportation and safety needs, and responsibly scaled should be built, but H.R. 850 and its companion in the U.S. Senate, S. 1134, are bills that should be rejected. I appreciate that the willingness of Taxpayers for Common Sense for voicing their concerns about this mega-bridge exemption and I have enclosed their letter to the House Natural Resources Committee for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

TAXPAYERS FOR COMMON SENSE,

October 4, 2011.

OPPOSE H.R. 850: IT'S TIME TO RETHINK THE STILLWATER BRIDGE

DEAR NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBER: Taxpayers for Common Sense Action urges you to oppose H.R. 850 ("To facilitate a proposed project in the Lower St. Croix Wild and Scenic River") when it comes before the Natural Resources Committee for your consideration. Proponents argue that this bill will not cost any taxpayer dollars, but granting the proposed bridge between Minnesota and Wisconsin over the St. Croix River an exemption from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is one of the final few steps before taxpayers are asked to pay many millions on a bridge that is far too large in scope and far too expensive. A bridge in this location is warranted to replace an outdated lift bridge, but needs to be done at a far lower cost. The project as proposed should be rejected.

The current fight over spending cuts and the debt ceiling highlights the immense budget challenges our nation faces, including a trillion-dollar-plus deficit and more than \$14 trillion in debt. The state of our transportation program is little better, as the highway trust fund collects inadequate funds to meet the nation's transportation challenges. As a result, doing more with less is essential, and the same holds true for the proposed St. Croix River crossing.

We are deeply concerned about the scale and cost of this project for a number of reasons:

Driven by a desire to create a "signature" bridge for the region, stakeholders chose the most expensive alternative. This would be by far the most expensive bridge ever constructed in Minnesota, and would be more expensive than the cost of two other Minnesota bridges—the I-35W and Lafayette bridges—combined, yet will carry less than 10% as much traffic. When every dollar is scarce, it is simply irresponsible to build signature bridges that place form before function, and asking taxpayers to fund such an expensive project to carry the 18,000 vehicles the current bridge accommodates is simply outrageous.

According to Minnesota Department of Transportation documents, the so-called "extradosed" bridge proposed for this project, comes with "relatively high cost risk." An extradosed bridge—a combination of a box girder bridge and a cable-stayed bridge—is under construction in Connecticut, and that is the only other example of its kind in the U.S. MnDOT lists its own

lack of internal expertise regarding such a bridge as a project risk. Though some of the extra risk has been built into the project's cost estimate, there still remains an increased chance of cost overruns.

Building this bridge would limit the funds available for the other priorities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Combined, the two states have more than 2,000 deficient bridges and nearly 6 million trips are made across them every day. In addition, nearly half the roads in Minnesota and Wisconsin need additional maintenance to get them back to "good" condition. Building such an expensive bridge across the St. Croix, with the chance of significant cost overruns, would seriously hamper each state's ability to perform these vital maintenance efforts in as timely a manner as possible, to say nothing of new facilities that may be required to relieve congestion, improve safety, facilitate commerce, and keep the transportation system moving efficiently.

There is little question that a new bridge is required at this location to replace the outdated lift bridge that currently carries traffic over the St. Croix, but only if it can be done at a far lower cost than is currently envisioned. The proposed bridge is a relic from a different time: before our nation finally committed to taking care of its budget mess, before the end of the housing boom that dramatically changed the landscape in western Wisconsin, and before the realization that the current state of our transportation program may lead to a cut as deep as 30% from current funding levels in future years.

At the very least, it is worth taking a hard look at additional alternatives to determine whether we can accommodate the region's transportation needs at a far lower cost to taxpayers, and possibly without an exemption from the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. We understand that there is an urgency to move forward with a new bridge, but accepting a project that is too big and too expensive for the sake of speeding project delivery would be irresponsible at any time, and even more so while we are doing everything possible to find our way out of a budgetary mess.

If you would like additional information, please contact Erich Zimmermann in my office at (202) 546-8500 x132.

Sincerely,

RYAN ALEXANDER,
President.

HONORING THE LIFE OF REV.
FRED SHUTTLESWORTH

HON. JOHN CONYERS, JR.

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 5, 2011

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to celebrate the life and legacy of the late Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth. Today, we mourn the loss of an American soldier who lived without fear to exemplify the power of nonviolence in the ongoing fight against injustice, inequality and inequity.

No other word best describes civil rights pioneer Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth but the word "fearless." Rev. Shuttlesworth was a native of Alabama and spent his entire life there dedicated to combating discrimination and the alienation of underrepresented communities. He co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and was a key strategist of nonviolent campaigns, working alongside notable civil rights leaders such as Dr.